

Florida Mountain Mining Sites,
Phillips Mine
Silver City Vicinity
Owyhee County
Idaho

HAER No. ID-31-J

HAER
ID
37-SILCIV
15-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Columbia Cascades System Support Office
909 First Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
FLORIDA MOUNTAIN MINING SITES, PHILLIPS MINE

HAER NO. ID-31-J

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Location: The Phillips site is located on the east side of Florida Mountain, near Black Jack Gulch, and the Empire State Mine.

Quad: USGS DeLamar 7.5'
UTM Coordinates: Zone 11 519909 E, 4763180 N

Date of Construction: 1880s

Present Owners: Kinross DeLamar Mine Company

Present Use: To be demolished

Significance: The site is associated with mining activity in southwestern Idaho (1860s-1880s).

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Date: June 1995

Site Layout and Description:

The site consists of an adit that is located slightly below and north of Sullivan mine. It lies on a flat ledge on a less severe slope than the Sullivan mine. The area surrounding the adit consists of low brush, consisting of scrub sage and other bushes; no trees are left on the site. Rhyolite rubble covers the ground. A very recent road cuts in front of the mine portal. A rock dump is located across the road from the adit; no remnants of a tramway or trolley tracks remain by the dump. Some iron cable is located 30 yards above the adit.

The mine portal consists of milled lumber in a post-and-beam construction. The timbers are nailed together with round nails. A recent grill gate has been placed over the entrance. The entrance's dimensions are approximately 5 1/2' wide by 6'8" tall. The cap and posts measure 8" x 8". A spreader lies below the cap; they measure approximately 2" x 6". Outer posts brace the framing at a 45 degree angle; their dimensions are 4" x 6". One layer of flat lagging lies over the cap. Its dimensions are 3" x 6". Another layer of flat lagging of approximately 3" x 6" is laid horizontally over the first layer. Unpeeled pole lagging composed the final top layer; the poles covered by rhyolite debris. The side lagging fully covers all posts on the interior. The lagging planks measure 2" x 6". None of timbers are mortised and tenoned; they are only held together by nails.

Though this site is approximately the same age as the Sullivan mine, it looks slightly newer in construction and may have been used more recently. Some reconstruction or additions to shore up the entrance may have been done over the years.

Historic Context:

The Jacobs Gulch miner, John F. Sullivan, was actively involved in several mining ventures on Florida mountain. Deed records indicate that Sullivan, with Isaac Phillips, located the Sullivan and Phillips mines in May 1887.¹ Although separate deeds were issued the mines were worked together as one. A May 21 article in the Idaho Avalanche noted that "John F. Sullivan and Isaac Phillips have discovered a large quartz lode several hundred feet west of the Black Jack, which contains fine milling ore in great quantities". By June, the two had sunk a shaft into the lode and it was estimated that the vein of ore was approximately 5 or 6 feet wide. The discovery was made under "the old Black Jack ore house" and it was thought that the lode fed the placers of Coffee Gulch.²

In January of 1888, Phillips and Sullivan were extracting enough metals to keep a mill running. It was reported that the mine turned out "5 bars of bullion valued at over \$11,000 as a result of the first run." The ore was not high grade and was valued at \$32 a ton.³ In December they leased the mine to four miners, Mr. Hicks, Murray, Gearhart and Kent, for six months.⁴

Beginning in 1890 Sullivan and Phillips were again in charge of the mine. There was enough work at the mine to employ four men. Two men worked on the drift and two men worked on stoping.⁵ In February of that year it was reported that the richest ore was being sacked and that the lode got larger and richer the deeper it went into the mountain.⁶ The April 26 edition of the Idaho

Avalanche stated that the ore from the mine was milled at \$100 to \$300 per ton. This was a considerable increase from 1888. In June, 80 tons were taken to the Leonard mill for processing.⁷ There was good news for all the miners of Florida Mountain in July. The tunnel being cross cut between the Black Jack and the Empire State was cut through the Phillips and Sullivan property. It was discovered that the lode was richer than the levels above and double the width of earlier lodes.⁸

Sullivan and Phillips continued to push a drift south and reached the chute of ore from which the lessees had previously taken out \$20,000 in ore. The chute widened to three feet and had a rich vein of silver and gold.⁹ Ten to twelve tons were taken from the mine daily and hauled to Leonards mill.¹⁰ In November, a large chimney of ore was discovered and six men were hired to work in the mine. When the discovery was made, Phillips and Sullivan had an option to a party for \$100,000. The option expired on November 1. The Idaho Avalanche described the incident in a November issue:

"The owners haven't been working the richest ore, not wanting to encourage the option holder....A streak of talc clay in the lode is literally bound together with wire gold. Phillips lost sleep over whether his miners would let the cat out of the bag before the option expired. They are now working this chimney."¹¹

The following winter was spent making improvements to the mine. Phillips and Sullivan contracted with their crew to run a crosscut tunnel into the ledge into the adjacent Belfast claim.¹² They had located the Belfast claim near the mouth of the Phillips and Sullivan tunnel in 1889.¹³

The mine continued to produce steadily into 1892. It was described in an issue of the Owyhee Avalanche as "one of the few mines which, in miner's parlance, has been a good poor man's mine. It has paid from the grass roots down, paying owners and everyone connected with it." ¹⁴

Phillips and Sullivan took regular shipments of ore from the mine through 1893 and 1894. However, in 1895 they dissolved their partnership and the Phillips and Sullivan mines were brought to court for settlement. Superintendent James Hutchinson of the Trade Dollar was appointed receiver for the property.¹⁵

The following year, the Idaho & Pittsburgh Mining & Milling Company bought the Phillips, Sullivan and Belfast for a low price of \$25,000.¹⁶ Eventually, the mines became part of the numerous claims of the Trade Dollar Consolidated Mining & Milling Company. The company was formed in 1899 to merge and manage property previously held by the Idaho & Pittsburgh Mining & Milling Company, the Trade Dollar Mining & Milling Company, and the Florida Mountain Mining & Milling Company.¹⁷ The ownership of the Trade Dollar group continued to change after 1910, when the Trade Dollar Consolidated Mining & Milling Company evolved into the Swan Falls Power Company and then into Peter Steele's Empire Mines Company. The mines appear to have remained in the Empire Mines Company until 1959.

The names of the Phillips and Sullivan mines are included in annual reports for the Inspector of Mines though the ownership changed several times. It appears the Phillips and Sullivan mines were used to access the Belfast and Black Jack tunnels for the Trade Dollar group. No further information or production figures are available for these sites.

END NOTES

1. Owyhee County Courthouse, Mining Claims Book 7, pages 287-288.
2. No heading, Idaho Avalanche, May 21, 1887, page 3.
3. "Local Intelligence," Idaho Avalanche, January 25, 1888, page 3.
4. "Local Intelligence," Idaho Avalanche, December 8, 1888 page 3.
5. "Local Intelligence," Idaho Avalanche, March 27, 1890 page 3.
6. "Local Intelligence," Idaho Avalanche, February 22, 1890, page 3.
7. "Mining Mention," Idaho Avalanche, June 7, 1890, page 3.
8. "Local Intelligence," Idaho Avalanche, July 5, 1890 page 3.
9. No heading, Idaho Avalanche, July 26, 1890 page 3.
10. "Local Intelligence," Idaho Avalanche, August 30, 1890, page 3.
11. "A Booming Camp, New and Rich Developments," Idaho Avalanche, November 8, 1890, page 3.
12. "Mining Mention," Idaho Avalanche, December 13, 1890 page 3.
13. Owyhee County Mining Claims, Book 8, page 57.
14. "Phillips and Sullivan Mines," Idaho Avalanche, February 13, 1892, page 1.
15. "Phillips and Sullivan," Idaho Avalanche, August 23, 1895 page 13.
16. "The Deal Closed," Idaho Avalanche, February 26, 1896, page 1.
17. "Florida Mountain Mining" Robert Romig, unpublished report, 1992, Idaho State Historical Society Library and Archives.

